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ABSTRACT

This guide to effective writing strategies is based on three ideas that provide motivation for writing skills development in an advanced placement history class: students learn to write by writing; problem essays are more effective in developing writing skills than topic essays; and writing is a learning tool. Stressing that writing practice is essential for a successful score on the national examination in advanced placement European history, strategies are given on how to sturcture essays that emphasize comparing and contrasting and also how to develop thesis analysis questions; how to design prewriting experiences, including role playing, lectures, and use of facsimiles and index cards; how to grade essays featuring a debriefing approach and essay analysis sheets for student grading procedures; and how to employ organizational methods for document based questions. A list of several competitive and tutorial programs for practice work is included. (TRS)

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WRITING STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCED PLACEMENT EUROPEAN HISTORY

By

Jacqueline Young

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PREFACE

The College Board does not recommend a particular style of writing or a curriculum for Advanced Placement European History classes. The methods that I am sharing with you in this pamphlet reflect what I have found to be successful in my classroom. You are welcome to adapt any of the lessons to your own style and classroom needs.

WRITING STRATEGIES

Research about writing supports the following three ideas:

1)Students learn to write by writing.
2)Problems are more effective than topics.
3)Writing is a learning tool.

These three ideas provide powerful motivation to emphasize writing in the Advanced Placement history class. Fifty per cent of each student's grade from the national examination will be based on an evaluation of two written essays. The national essay questions are problem-centered and require the student to think critically rather than to repeat memorized material. Writing practice is essential for a successful score in Advanced Placement. Writing also helps the student to learn the material beyond mere recall, thus improving the student's ability to answer the multiple choice part of the examination. If you use writing as one of your instructional methods, your students' chances of superior performances will improve.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Essay questions should be problem-centered. Previous examination questions are available from the College Board. If you read these questions carefully, you will see that certain types of questions are often repeated. An easy way for both you and your students to become familiar with the questions is to duplicate several past question sets, separate the questions, and try to find patterns for the questions. For example, you might categorize the questions chronologically, topically, or geographically.

Comparison and contrast questions seem to be frequently used. This is the model that I use with my students for comparison/ contrast answers:

Introductory Paragraph

1)Write a topic sentence
2)Define the terms in the question
3)Provide historical context for the period
4)Write a thesis which divides the answer into categories

Body

1)Each category of the thesis should be expanded into a paragraph (or paragraphs)
2)Each paragraph should have the following elements:
    A)Topic sentence
    B)Evidence to support the topic sentence
    C)Summary of main points and restatement of the category related to the thesis
3)The paragraphs should be arranged to allow balance between similarities and differences.

Conclusion

1)Topic sentence
2)Summarize each paragraph in the body
3)Restate the thesis

The comparison/contrast model provides a plan for student writing and allows the student to concentrate on what to write rather than how to write. The model also provides a logical way to approach the problem. For example, if the student were writing about Luther's responses to the political and social questions of his day and comparing and contrasting these responses as revolutionary or conservative, the essay might be approached in this manner:

Introduction

1)Topic sentence--a general statement introducing the time period of the early Reformation.
2)Identification of key elements in the question--Martin Luther, the social and political questions of the time, revolutionary, and conservative.
3)Historical context--important points to be made about historical factors affecting the Reformation and/or historiography.
4)Thesis--in what ways Luther was a conservative and in what ways Luther was a revolutionary in response to the political/social issues of his day.

Body

1)The body should be divided into categories--the most direct approach is to write a paragraph dealing with political issues and a paragraph dealing with social issues. Within each paragraph Luther's response should be noted and the response should be identified as conservative or revolutionary. The identification requires that the student evaluate the responses according to the definitions set forth in the introduction. The evaluation process also requires that the student understand the terms revolutionary and conservative in the context of the early Protestant Reformation.

2)An alternative approach would be to center each paragraph around a particular event such as the Peasant's Revolt, identify the event as social and/or political, discuss Luther's response to the event, and evaluate whether Luther's response was revolutionary or conservative in the context of the early Protestant Reformation.

3)Other approaches are possible. Valid answers will require the student to:
   A)Recall events from Luther's time period.
   B)Categorize these events as political or social.
   C)Recall Luther's responses to the events.
   D)Evaluate Luther's responses as revolutionary or conservative within the context of the time.
   E)Recognize that Luther was both a revolutionary and a conservative.
   F)Present the information in a clear, logical manner.

Conclusion

1)Topic sentence--summarize the general theme of the essay.
2)Summarize each paragraph of the essay.
3)Present a conclusion which restates the thesis.

The other types of questions can be written in a similar way. One strategy I use is thesis analysis. Provide your students with a list of questions from the national examination. The analysis of the questions can be completed individually, in groups, or as a class. Some students find it helpful to draw a model of the question. Examples follow.

==========

One of the 1981 free response questions required the student to analyze the major social, political, and technological changes that took place in European warfare between the French Revolution and the end of World War I.

```
Social      *
              *
Technological * (ANALYZE) CHANGES  -----> WARFARE (1789-1918)
              *
Political   *
```

==========

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A 1982 free response question asked why the Weimar Republic failed.

```
              ..(WHY)..*
(Identify)    ..(WHY)..*----> FAILURE OF WEIMAR REPUBLIC (1919-1933)
              ..(WHY)..*
```

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A 1984 free response question asked students to describe the steps taken between 1832 and 1918 to extend English suffrage. In addition, the student was instructed to identify the groups and movements contributing to the extension of the vote.

```
              *..(WHO)..*              ..(STEPS)..

(Identify)..*..(WHO)..*..(Describe)..(STEPS)..English Suffrage
                                                 (1832-1918)

              *..(WHO)..*              ..(STEPS)..
```

==========

Thesis analysis requires that students understand such terms as EXPLAIN, DISCUSS, ASSESS, TO WHAT EXTENT, DESCRIBE, IDENTIFY, and COMPARE. Another problem students encounter is limiting their answers to the boundaries of the question. Often, students have little understanding of such terms as political, social, economic,

religious, philosophical, and cultural. An easy way to drill students is to prepare a list of facts for any issue being discussed in class. Then, have students classify each fact according to the terms above. Some facts will have more than one classification, but the important point to be made with students is that they should start with a clear understanding of a classification and explain in their essays how each fact fits the classification.

Thesis analysis can be followed by writing outlines of answers. Holistic grading is used for the national examinations. Divergent answers are acceptable. Therefore, you will wish to encourage your students to write essay answers in a problem solving manner. Answers are acceptable if evidence is used in a logical manner to support the writer's viewpoint. Writing outlines can be fun. These methods will turn passive learning into active learning:

1)Brainstorm outlines as individuals, groups, or class
  A)Write all ideas for the essay on the board or on newsprint with magic markers
  B)Organize the ideas by category
  C)Arrange the categories into an essay outline
  D)If different outlines are made, compare the outlines

2)Use concept mapping
  A)Start with a concept and link to other concepts
  B)Organize the concepts and links into a linear outline

3)Cut-up evidence
  A)Type all the evidence that relates to a particular question
  B)Reproduce
  C)Cut-up and scramble
  D)Have students organize the evidence

4)Cut-up outline
  A)Type an outline for an essay answer
  B)Reproduce
  C)Cut-up and scramble
  D)Have students organize into an acceptable outline

PRE-WRITING EXPERIENCES

Students do not write well unless they have something to write about. Writing instruction should involve pre-writing experiences. These ideas work.

Role-playing

Reproduce a document based question, cut out the documents, paste on cards (laminate if you have time), and give each card to a student. Proceed to a discussion of the question with each student contributing according to the role assigned. This works well with the livelier document based questions such as Women's Education, Witchcraft, Child-Rearing, and Juvenile Delinquency. If you have more students than roles, either double up or have a panel discussion. Students should write the essay for homework or as classwork the next day.

Prepare a scenario for the discussion of a problem or different ideas. Two which have worked well for me: the problem of Henry VIII's divorce and the recreation of a French salon during the Enlightenment. Both require some advance preparation. Prepared students do a better job. This may involve some library research for them and you. For Henry's divorce negotiations, we invited the Pope, Charles V, Sir Thomas More, Catherine, Anne, Wolsey, and Henry. Students were given brief biographies and instructions to learn more. Understudies are essential because students, especially the first time role playing is attempted, will sometimes be absent.

The French salon gathered the more well-known philosophes for discussion. A list of questions was prepared before class to keep the conversation from lagging. Atmosphere may be added with candles, appropriate music, wine (ginger ale), snacks, and a charming host (teacher). Historical disclaimers--no, these people would not have all been in the same room at the same time, we are hypothesizing that they would have had these thoughts, and we may not be historically accurate. Caution for the teacher--role playing requires diligent preparation because the questions and ideas are not controlled by the limits of a worksheet or lecture.

Use an historian's panel to discuss an issue. Different interpretations exist for every historical problem. Students take on the identity of different historians and argue the viewpoints. This works best when the students have researched the evidence supporting the various views.

Lectures

Lectures are suitable when information delivery is the primary goal. Lectures are EQUAL to or BETTER THAN other techniques for immediate recall. Lectures are NOT SUPERIOR when measuring delayed recall.

A MAJOR TASK OF THE LECTURER IS TO KEEP THE AUDIENCE AWAKE

Lectures are more interesting if:

1)the lecturer is enthusiastic
2)body motion and body language are used
3)humor is incorporated
4)mood swings occur
5)gimmicks are part of the presentation

Students may prefer lectures because learning is passive and requires less activity from them. One study indicated that students do not pay attention for ONE-THIRD of the average lecture. A high school student has an attention span (tops!) of ten to fifteen minutes.

Lectures can be improved by:

1)using an advance organizer
2)outlining points to be covered
3)keeping main points to a minimum
4)using simple language and style
5)staying within capabilities of listeners
6)using some technique to involve the listeners
7)encouraging listener participation
8)summarizing main points
9)positively reinforcing attention and note taking

Jackdaws (or other facsimiles of documents and artifacts)

Students love mysteries. Jackdaws (available from Social Studies School Service) are facsimiles of primary source documents for historical topics. Many teachers use Jackdaws as bulletin boards. I think they work better as learning activities. Laminate your set of Jackdaws, read the explanations that come with the topic, and then make up a set of questions for the students to answer. I laminate the explanations, use the documents as exhibits, and place the explanations in envelopes. Students answer questions at each exhibit and then open the envelope to check their answers. This makes excellent group work because the students argue so much. My favorite Jackdaws are The Conquest of Mexico and The Armada.

As a good teacher, you probably collect all kinds of things that could be used to put together a learning activity. Museums sell artifact copies, reproductions, postcards, and models. Out-of-date calendars often have beautiful reproductions of paintings. Take the calendar apart, laminate the art work, and DON'T tape it to the wall. Give each student the task of being a docent for a particular painting, have students select the painting which best represents its time period and explain why, or DO tape the painting to the wall and create a museum in your classroom. Don't throw away the gilt doubloons you bought at Disney World or the da Vinci model your son gave up on. Use the set of postcard reproductions of World War I recruiting post cards to determine how

people are persuaded to support wars.

Index Cards

This idea is a more advanced system of flash cards. Identify the major terms, people, and events that you think are important for a particular unit. Give students this list with instructions to write a definition on the back of a card and the term, person, or event on the front. Let students work in groups if the lists are extensive. Grading can be handled by randomly picking five cards from a deck and assigning from 0 to 20 points to each card based on the quality of response.

These cards become more useful as the year progresses. In studying for the national examination, the student can sort out all of his artists, rulers, and treaties; he can sort by centuries, topics, or countries--the process is very practical. Review activities are unlimited. A simple classroom review involves one student giving a description and naming a volunteer to answer. If the answer is correct, the volunteer earns a point and may ask the next question. If the answer is incorrect, the questioner gains a point, and names another volunteer.

GRADING ESSAYS

Become familiar with the fifteen point grading scale used by the College Board. I use this scale when grading essays and I explain to the students how each essay was graded. You won't always have time to explain an essay topic in class. I often use what I call "debriefing" hand-outs. These hand-outs are an explanation of how the essay was graded, what points I was looking for, and what problems I found in the papers graded. Sometimes I duplicate the national standards for a particular essay topic (available in the regular reports of the Chief Reader for European History or from workshop consultants).

Students apparently respond more to helpful comments than to negative comments. Note, while grading, particularly good points, and refer to the student when debriefing the essay: "Susan had a really good thesis statement. Will you read your thesis to the class?" Essay grading offers a wonderful opportunity for individualizing instruction. Carry on a dialogue with the student. Show the student how a statement might be expanded or changed. All of this takes time, but if you grade carefully at the beginning of the course, you'll find that the writing improves rapidly and your grading time decreases.

Quick methods for improving writing skills:

Ask each student to read his/her thesis statement aloud for class analysis. Does the thesis statement answer the question? Class discussion should be conducted in a helpful rather than a derogatory manner.

Type a list of all the astonishing things that students wrote about a topic which you were previously unaware of: Rousseau was a red table, da Vinci painted MADONNA ON THE ROCKS, Hitler was born in Australia, etc. Label this list, True or False Quiz, and administer to students with a straight face. Generally, students do figure out what you've done and seem to be quite eager to admit their authorship. You clear up some misconceptions. Sometimes the students learn enough to appreciate the humor in the misconceptions.

Student grading

Having students grade some essays (with you as final arbitrator) is a valid approach. English teachers do this without pangs of conscience--so can you. Provide the students with a grading guide (national examination standards work well) and have each essay graded separately by two or more students. Record the average.

The following is a very structured method for grading which concentrates on the development of a logical style. I use this approach during the second semester after the students have become proficient in the essay form. The student being evaluated must rewrite the essay before I grade it if the student grader has given the essay a score below 30. Having the obvious flaws worked out first lessens my grading time. The students also learn from analyzing each other's work. This works best if good and poor writers are paired. Assign as homework after students have written an essay. The instructions are for a standard three category thesis, five paragraph essay.

ESSAY ANALYSIS SHEET I

Using your partner's essay, complete the following tasks:

1-A Copy the topic sentence from the essay:

1-B Copy the thesis from the essay:

2-A List all the terms in the question:

	Term	Definition
1)		
2)		
3)		
4)		

2-B Copy the definitions for the terms above as defined in the introductory paragraph.

3-A Copy the first sentence of the second paragraph of the essay:

3-B Copy the last sentence of the second paragraph of the essay:

3-C Summarize the information given in the second paragraph:

4-A Copy the first sentence of the third paragraph of the essay:

4-B Copy the last sentence of the third paragraph of the essay:

4-C Summarize the evidence given in the third paragraph of the essay:

5-A Copy the first sentence of the fourth paragraph of the essay:

5-B Copy the last sentence of the fourth paragraph of the essay:

5-C Summarize the evidence given in the fourth paragraph of the essay:

6-A Copy the first sentence of the conclusion:

6-B Copy the last sentence of the conclusion:

6-C Summarize the information given in the paragraph.

ESSAY ANALYSIS SHEET II

Using Essay Analysis Sheet I (not the essay itself!), complete the analysis of the essay by circling YES or NO for each statement.

1-A	The topic sentence is related to the question.	YES NO
1-A	The topic sentence incorporates the main parts of the question.	YES NO
1-B	Thesis Analysis	
	a)The thesis answers the question.	YES NO
	b)The thesis divides the answer to the question into categories.	YES NO
	c)The categories are logical and related to the problem.	YES NO
2-A	Definitions	
	a)All terms in the question are identified.	YES NO
	b)The identifications are accurate and complete.	YES NO
3-A	The sentence relates to the first category of the thesis.	YES NO
3-B	The sentence summarizes the information given in the paragraph.	YES NO
3-B	The sentence restates the first category of the thesis.	YES NO
3-C	The information is accurate.	YES NO
3-C	The information fits the category of the paragraph.	YES NO
3-C	The information clearly answers the question.	YES NO
3-C	The information is adequate.	YES NO
4-A	The sentence relates to the second category of the thesis.	YES NO
4-B	The sentence summarizes the information given in the paragraph.	YES NO
4-B	The sentence restates the second category of the thesis.	YES NO
4-C	The information is accurate.	YES NO

4-C	The information fits the category of the paragraph.	YES NO
4-C	The information clearly answers the question.	YES NO
4-C	The information is adequate.	YES NO
5-A	The sentence relates to the third category of the thesis.	YES NO
5-B	The sentence summarizes the information given in the paragraph.	YES NO
5-B	The sentence restates the third category of the thesis.	YES NO
5-C	The information is accurate.	YES NO
5-C	The information fits the category of the paragraph.	YES NO
5-C	The information clearly answers the question.	YES NO
5-C	The information is adequate.	YES NO
6-A	The sentence is similar to 1-A, but not a direct copy.	YES NO
6-B	The sentence restates the answer and is similar to but not a direct copy of the thesis.	YES NO
6-C	The information summarized corresponds with the information for 3, 4, and 5.	YES NO

Count the number of YES choices circled. If the author has earned a score of 30 or higher, the essay may now be turned in with these analysis sheets. If the score is lower than 30, the author must rewrite the essay before submitting it to the instructor for final grading.

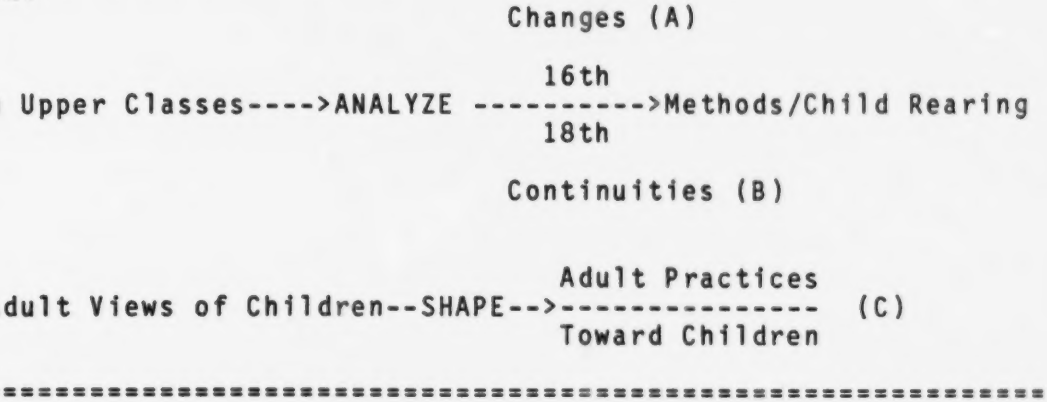
DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

The Document Based Question provides most of the information a student will need to write an answer. Students may improve their grade for this part of the examination by clearly organizing their answers and by demonstrating critical thinking.

A quick organizational method is to make a model of the question and code the parts of the question. An example follows.

==========

The 1982 Document Based Question required an analysis of the continuities and changes in methods of child-rearing among the English upper classes from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Additionally, the students were asked to explain how adult views of children shaped adult practices toward their children.



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Now that the student has a model to follow, parts of each document can be quickly coded A, B, or C. Writing the essay then involves organizing the data into three categories: changes (A), continuities (B), and views shaping adult practices (C). Since the student is given a fifteen minute reading period followed by a forty-five minute writing period, this is an excellent way to organize thoughts.

Critical thinking involves analysis of the problem. Historians test the validity of their sources. The student should recognize the bias in the documents given. If the student refers to the documents as "a letter written by Lady Duncannon to Lady Spencer" or "a medical handbook written by a family physician" and then evaluates the validity of the source, the student will be demonstrating critical thinking. Do not allow your students to acquire the habit of referring to "Document 1, Document 2, ..." because this type of reference negates thoughtful analysis of sources. Explain different types of documents to the students and how the documents vary. Emphasize the differences between cartoons, portraits, diaries, letters, speeches, religious tracts, government documents, committee reports, memoirs, satirical works,

plays, poems, and other sources.

Finally, stress that most of the documents must be used to support the answer. Some documents will not "fit" the tone of the other documents. It is very important that the student recognize that history does not come in a neat package. Recognizing the tension between documents will also improve the score for the essay. The student may know a great deal about the topic but should not sacrifice the documents in order to demonstrate previously acquired knowledge. The Document Based Question is used to assess the student's ability to work with historical information.

FINAL COMMENTS

Frequent writing assignments will prepare the student for the national examination in Advanced Placement European History and for the multiple choice part of the examination. Writing assignments will be more helpful if you use problems rather than topics. Former national examination questions are excellent guides for essay problems. Writing the answers to challenging questions keeps the student actively engaged in the process of historical analysis.

Cristobal offers several programs for the history teacher. The following programs are available for TRS-80 Models III and 4.

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These programs are divided by centuries. Each century is a self-contained two disk program containing 300 questions about the time period. These programs are an excellent supplement to advanced and Advanced Placement high school programs in history or as practice for academic competitions. The questions are separated into the categories of chronology, war and politics, culture, biographies, lifestyles, and vocabulary. The programs may be used in a competitive or tutorial format.

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